

I-17-Carefree Highway interchange set to open

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The Interstate 17 interchange at Carefree Highway is set to fully open next week, the Arizona Department of Transportation reports.

The interchange underwent major reconstruction to accommodate more than four times its original traffic capacity.

Most of the new interchange is already open. However, all ramps and lanes at the interchange will be fully operational Wednesday morning.

According to ADOT officials, the modern design utilizes traditional diamond interchange entrance and exit ramps, as well as loop ramps, to eliminate left turns at traffic signals in the high-demand directions. It's designed to significantly improve traffic flow. In particular, the loop ramps will prove especially beneficial for drivers of longer vehicles, such as the many boaters who use the interchange heading to Lake Pleasant. They will not need to make left turns at the interchange.

The previous outdated Carefree Highway interchange was demolished and the new, wider overpass was built in its place.

The new overpass bridge includes two travel lanes in each direction, as well as dual left-turn lanes and dedicated right-turn lanes to enhance traffic flow entering I-17.

The \$19.6 million Carefree Highway interchange is one of several I-17 improvement projects under way north of Loop 101, including constructing new interchanges to improve freeway access and widening I-17 by two lanes in each direction between Loop 101 and Carefree Highway.

It's all part of a massive I-17 reconstruction effort targeted for completion in 2009 and included in the 20-year Regional Transportation Plan. Another project to widen I-17 between Carefree Highway and Anthem Way is scheduled to begin next year, with completion in 2010.

More information about I-17 improvements, including maps and timetables, can be found at www.ValleyFreeways.com or by calling the I-17 hotline at 480-890-3055. Drivers are encouraged to sign up for ADOT's weekly I-17 [e-mail](#) alerts for construction-related restrictions.

For a complete listing of freeway and highway restrictions across Arizona, visit ADOT's Travel Information site at www.az511.gov or call 511.